

# THE MILFORD CONTRA DANCE

*Physically Distanced Yet Socially Connected!*



NEWSLETTER #3

SEPTEMBER 2020

## MESSAGE FROM SANDY, PETER, RICH, KATE, AND BILL

Hello All,

Sandy here. I attended the “When Can We Safely Dance Again?” sponsored by New York’s Dance Flurry. In addition to dancers and organizers, three medical professionals - with medical ethics and public health backgrounds participated. As expected, the nature of dancing does not easily allow for physical distancing. Everyone seemed comfortable and reconciled to this information. It was suggested that we find ways to stay socially connected with our dance community. These newsletters are our way of doing just that. We hope you are enjoying them and encourage your input!



### LOUIS CYR BY PAUL LIZOTTE

“Louis Cyr” has become a favorite tune at both contra dances and Quebecois sessions. Its dramatic opening, propulsive rhythms, and concluding flourish make it a compelling tune both to play and dance to. It’s been featured at Maine Fiddle Camp and frequently played at sessions in Montreal, making its way into the New England repertoire.

The tune was composed by Quebecois Jean-Claude Mirandette as an homage to an actual person—one of the most famous strongmen of the late 19th century, Louis Cyr. In fact, some consider Louis to have been the

strongest man in history. Louis was born in 1863, the oldest of 17 children, in a small town south of Montreal. He was reported to have been 18 pounds at birth. While his father was of average stature, his mother stood six foot two, weighed 267 pounds and was immensely strong. By the age of 12 Louis was working at lumber camps in the winter and the family farm the rest of the year. He grew to be a big man with an enormous appetite—it’s said that he ate more than 4 normal men to maintain his normal contest weight of 320lbs. By contrast his wife never weighed more than 100 lbs.

His family moved to Lowell in 1878 to take work in the textile mills. In 1881 he competed in and won his first strongman competition. It revolved around one feat: who could lift a horse overhead. It’s

(Continued on page 3)



## CHARISMATIC MEGAFUNA BY LINDA LESLIE (VISUALIZE THIS DANCE)

Beckett/Beg-Int

- A1 Give & take Neighbor (Gent's side)
- A2 Ladies chain  
Promenade across, and move one place  
ccw to face new N's
- B1 Ring Balance, Petronella spin  
Ring Balance, Petronella spin
- B2 Partner B&S

Linda Leslie was a much beloved dance caller both at her Worcester, MA home dance and throughout New England. Linda's calling combined great enthusiasm, clear teaching and resonant voice compared to that of a sultry jazz singer. A Committee member of NEFFA, Linda also created about 150 dances usually choreographed for "a spur of the moment need for a particular evening or creative daydreaming" (Go to [Lindaleslie.caller.com/dance](http://Lindaleslie.caller.com/dance) to see a list of many of her dances with her comments) In 2018 Linda passed away at the age of 70 after a brief illness.

There is a lot going on in this dance starting with the initial line up of the dancers where partners are standing next to each rather than across from each other. Beckett formation, named for Beckett MA where it is thought the formation was first used, creates a much more active dance (Handy diagram with fuller explanation [here](#)) This new formation also allows dance writers to create all new formations and dances.

Beckett formation usually is disorienting for novice dancers as "chaining on a diagonal" is unexpected as is the need for the top and bottom dancers to be on alert to "chain on the diagonal" even though they are not dancing. The formation is most often reserved for intermediate and advanced dances.

The B section of the dance prominently uses a Petronella spin, (See the spin danced at the Peterborough Fall Ball ([here](#))). This move consists of a spin over the dancers right shoulder (clockwise)



once around to take his or her neighbors place. Controversy does exist in the form of an ongoing debate of "To Clap or Not to Clap (Read [here](#))" after the spin. Myself, I'm a "clapper" while Sandy, the more seasoned dancer, tends not to. We are able to maintain civil relations.

The phrase "Charismatic Megafauna" has meaning in the environmental world, but there is no explanation as to its' use as this dances' title. Rather, here is Linda Leslie's note about the dance: "Written for our friends Lucia Watson and Jeff Weiler so they could twirl like crazy in the chain."

Information provided by Sandy Lafleur, article written by Kate McClure



## A NICE THING ON THE WEB

The Toronto Contra Dance holds twice monthly virtual contra dances. Give it a try! Who knows dancing with imaginary people in your living room while 100 others dance on our computer screen might be more fun than you expected!

Go to the Toronto Facebook Page for more info

## A LITTLE MUSICIAN'S HUMOR

C, E-flat, and G go into a bar. The bartender says, "Sorry, but we don't serve minors."

So E-flat leaves, and C and G have an open fifth between them.

After a few drinks, the fifth is diminished, and G is out flat.

F comes in and tries to augment the situation, but is not sharp enough.

D comes in and heads for the bathroom, saying, "Excuse me; I'll just be a second."

Then A comes in, but the bartender is not convinced that this relative of C is not a minor.

Then the bartender notices B-flat hiding at the end of the bar and says, "Get out! You're the seventh minor I've found in this bar tonight."

E-flat comes back the next night in a three-piece suit with nicely shined shoes. The bartender says, "You're looking sharp tonight. Come on in, this could be a major development." Sure enough, E-flat soon takes off his suit and everything else, and is au naturel.

Eventually C sobers up and realizes in horror that he's under a rest. C is brought to trial, found guilty of contributing to the diminution of a minor, and is sentenced to 10 years of D.S. without Coda at an upscale correctional facility.

## BIRTHDAY SHOUTOUT TO BOB JERVIS!



A bright light at the Milford Contra dance, Bob is a long time dancer. He holds a number of "Iron Dancer" medals for the dancing five days in a row including the Brattleboro Dawn dance after a dance the night before! We wish Bob health and happiness for his next lap around the sun.

Below he receives his Iron Dancer medal at the Nelson Town Hall in 2008.



Iron Dancers  
Hannah, Derek, Sandy & Bob





## LOUIS CYR BY PAUL LIZOTTE (CONTINUED)

reported that “Louis lifted the horse with ease, thereby winning the competition and initiating a strength career which lasted two decades” (Barbend).

On his return to Quebec, Louis toured with his wife and family as “The Troupe Cyr.” The tours, however, did not bring the expected financial security and to support his family, Louis became a police officer in Montreal. While still on the force, he entered a strong man competition in Quebec against the then “World’s Strongest Man” and easily beat him, lifting a 218 point barbell with one hand and squatting a platform weighing 2,371 pounds. Feats such as these continued to amaze the public. On one occasion, he lifted a boulder weighing 480 pounds. On another, he lifted a horse weighing three quarters of a ton. His recorded feats included lifting 500 pounds with one finger and, perhaps his greatest in 1895, when he was reported to have lifted on his back 18 men standing on a platform, for a total weight of 3626 lbs.

Louis was a showman. In 1886 Louis went on tour through Canada, the United States, and England. His promoter offered \$5,000 to anyone who could best him. No one could. He grew his hair long, like Samson, his fame increased, and he became an idol of adoring fans. In Montreal in 1891, before some 10,000 people, Louis held in check 4 draught horses, two on each side, despite grooms cracking their whips to encourage the horses to pull harder, and he is said to have pushed a freight car up an incline.

Louis Cyr died of chronic nephritis on November 10th, 1912, at the age of 49. He hasn’t been forgotten. Today, located in the same area he patrolled as a police officer is the Parc Louis-Cyr, and a statue of ‘The Strongest Man in History’ ([Statue](#)) has stood in the Place des Hommes-Fort, ‘Strongman’s Square’, since 1970. In 2013 a highly regarded (82% Rotten

Tomatoes approval rating) film of his life, titled simply “Louis Cyr” was released - a testament that the myth and the man live on. ([Here](#))

The tune itself does justice to the man and offers a musical analogy to his famous weightlifting routine. It begins on a low G, dotted quarter note marking an abrupt start, and goes up the G scale, with a few dips before descending again—the musical equivalent of a weightlifter’s squat, lift, and release. The B-part then “raises the bar” an octave above and maintains that height with alternating G major and Am minor rolls, before ending with a series of triumphant triplets—the crowd’s roar of approval and Louis’ grunt of victory as the bar slams down to begin again. ([Music](#))

So think about Louis the next time you play the tune and what a fitting tribute it is to this larger-than-life Canadian.

~Written by Paul Lizotte, a NH-based fiddler, who has been playing at contra dances throughout New England for over 20 years. He is a member of Jumpstart, which plays regularly at the Mill City CD, and Binding Energy.





# CONTRA DANCE CROSSWORD

## BY AMANDA RAFKIN

Amanda Rafkin is a concert pianist, turned therapist, turned musical theater pianist and crossword puzzle constructor. Her puzzles have been published by the NYT, WSJ, LAT, USA Today, Universal, AVCX, The Atlantic, and The Inkubator, as well as on her indie puzzle site Brain Candy ([amandarafkin.blogspot.com](http://amandarafkin.blogspot.com)). She can be found talking about puzzles on Twitter at [@amandarafkin](https://twitter.com/amandarafkin).

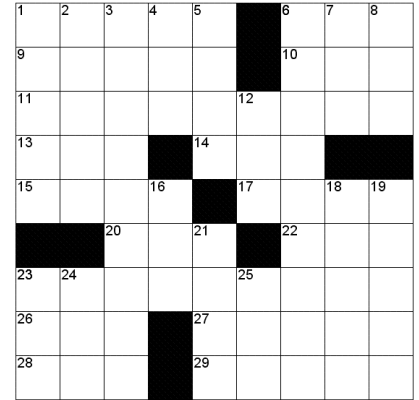


### ACROSS

1. \_\_\_ your partner
6. In favor of
9. It's celebrated on 3/14
10. Charged particle
11. Contra dance step with a "thumbs up" grip
13. Water cooler?
14. \_\_\_/her pronouns
15. Artsy N.Y.C. neighborhood
17. Purple superfruit
20. A good plot has one
22. No longer fresh
23. \_\_\_ go forward and back
26. Least desired loaf part, for some
27. "La Traviata," for one
28. Apple core?
29. Incredibly delicious

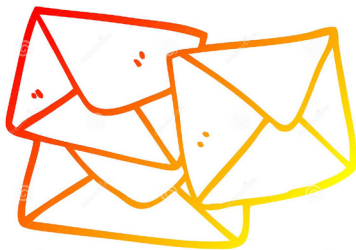
### DOWN

1. "The rain in \_\_\_ stays mainly in the plain"
2. Radio reply that's also an alternative rock band
3. The devil's playthings, or so it's said
4. Scottish denial



5. Work out locations
6. Conifer parts often used in making wreaths
7. Reel's partner
8. Final song of "A Chorus Line," inaptly
12. "Now I've got it!"
16. Alternative to .com or .gov
18. Not at all drowsy
19. "In my opinion..."
21. Congeal, as blood
23. Hula hoop?
24. Yoko who was married to John
25. Hopy brew, for short

*It is absolutely thrilling to have Amanda Rafkin construct a puzzle for our newsletter. She will be creating a puzzle for the October issue, so please submit ideas for a theme!*



## WE'D LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Have a germ of an idea for an article? Email us! We'll work on it together. "You can always edit a bad page. You can't edit a blank page" -Jodi Picoult. Please send submissions to : [strumma@aol.com](mailto:strumma@aol.com)

Milford Contra Dance is sponsored by the Milford New Hampshire Recreational Department

For contra dance crossword solution grid click [here](#)  
 For the cites for the Louis Cyr article click [here](#)

